

Bishop Ellis Catholic Voluntary Academy

URN: 149144

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Bishop of Nottingham

25–26 September 2024

Summary of key findings

Overall effectiveness

The overall quality of Catholic education provided by the school

Catholic life and mission (p.3)

How faithfully the school responds to the call to live as a Catholic community at the service of the Church's educational mission

Religious education (p.5)

The quality of curriculum religious education

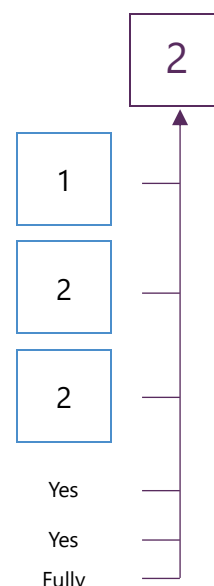
Collective worship (p.7)

The quality and range of liturgy and prayer provided by the school

The school is fully compliant with the general norms for religious education laid down by the Bishops' Conference

The school is fully compliant with any additional requirements of the diocesan bishop

The school has responded to the areas for improvement from the last inspection



Compliance statement

- The school is fully compliant with the general norms for religious education laid down by the Bishops' Conference.
- The school is fully compliant with the requirements of the diocesan bishop.
- The school has fully responded to the areas of development set out in the previous inspection report.

What the school does well

- Pupils and staff can clearly articulate the unique identity and mission of Bishop Ellis Catholic Voluntary Academy.
- The school provides high quality pastoral care.
- Pupils know how to make progress with their learning within religious education.
- There is an agreed and consistent approach to prayer and liturgy across the school.
- Leaders and governors demonstrate effective and rigorous monitoring of Catholic life and mission, religious education and collective worship.

What the school needs to improve

- Make explicit reference to Catholic social teaching within the curriculum for all age groups.
- Enable pupils to access regular opportunities for spiritual reflection within religious education lessons.
- Ensure that pupils can lead celebrations of the word independently, appropriate to their stage of development.

Catholic life and mission

How faithfully the school responds to the call to live as a Catholic community at the service of the Church's educational mission.

Catholic life and mission key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

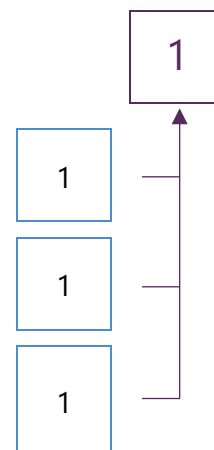
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life and mission of the school

Provision

The quality of provision for the Catholic life and mission of the school

Leadership

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic life and mission of the school



Pupils confidently articulate the unique Catholic identity of Bishop Ellis. They talk confidently about how their school's virtues link with the mission statement, saying, 'We show justice to those who may be less fortunate than us'. Pupils know they are valued because, 'teachers are kind and we can express how we feel in this school'. Pupils receive 'mission rewards' based on their positive action within the community. They understand how to care for the common good through their work towards achieving the 'Living Laudato Si' award: for example, the parish and school completed a river 'clean up' as part of their charitable work. Pupils value the opportunities provided to learn about different cultures and faiths. They embrace taking responsibility within the school, including being members of the chaplaincy, 'mini vinnies' and eco teams; they also work as part of the St Thomas Aquinas Catholic Multi-Academy Trust to create action plans and work to improve Catholic life and mission beyond their own school.

The Catholic character of the school is explicit in all areas. The school is awash with vibrant displays and scripture, including some references to Catholic social teaching. The school's virtues and mission are displayed in all public areas. Staff are excellent role models for pupils in living out the school's mission, and parent surveys support this view. Staff embrace the mission statement, seen through planned curriculum days which reference the bishop's spiritual themes, saints of the Church and stories from the Old Testament. Many staff regularly attend parish feast days, where they are passionate advocates for the school. There is an embedded culture of welcome which is echoed by parents: 'The headteacher's care trickles down to all: we feel invested in'. Pastoral care is of the highest quality in meeting the needs of the most vulnerable, evidenced through work with 'Family Society' partners and also through 'draw and talk' cognitive

therapy. This outstanding school environment is witness to the school's mission and clearly reflects the values of human dignity and respect. There are prayer areas both within and outside the school building where pupils can spend quiet reflection time. Chaplaincy provision across the school is well established. The school provides a range of well-planned and effective opportunities for the spiritual and moral development of pupils and staff, such as celebrations of the word, 'lectio divina' and 'visio divina'.

Leaders clearly and passionately live out the school's mission by keeping Christ at the centre of their community, saying, 'We live out our mission and virtues through caring for the most vulnerable in society'. Pastoral care is a real strength of the school. Secondary school transition feedback tells school leaders that, 'you can tell the pupils are from Bishop Ellis due to their awareness of faith and moral values'. The school actively participates in diocesan initiatives and has planned curriculum days in response. However, leaders and governors are not routinely explicit in ensuring that Catholic social teaching is referenced in the school curriculum. Leaders and governors have established a staff well-being committee which actively involves staff in a range of supportive activities, such as meditation. 100% of staff agree that Christ is at the centre of school life, enabling all pupils to 'fulfil their God-given talents and go out into the world and contribute in a positive way'. Catholic life and mission is strongly viewed by leaders and governors as a core leadership responsibility. Leaders and governors have ensured consistent rigour in school improvement through a systematic and planned approach to monitoring. They are relentless in their drive to strive for excellence. The teaching of relationships, sex and health education is meticulously planned using the Ten:Ten scheme.

Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

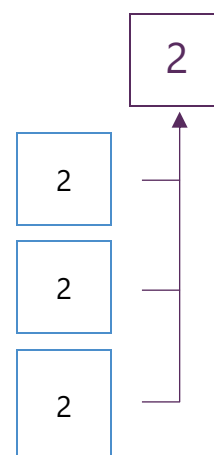
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

Provision

The quality of teaching, learning, and assessment in religious education

Leadership

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for religious education



Pupils' knowledge is secure in religious education: they can quote and discuss relevant scripture with understanding. In Year 6, pupils independently make links using scripture guidebooks, further developing their knowledge and skills. Pupils articulate what they think and feel, and how they live this out: however, pupils across the school do not consistently respond by making wider connections between everyday life and scripture. Where awe and wonder moments are celebrated in religious education lessons, pupils can independently think about God and form suitable questions, such as, 'I wonder how He made the world holy?' Most pupils are engaged and focused in lessons; some can use religious literacy to link learning to everyday life. Pupils understand the extension work provided within lessons. Workbooks are well presented and it is evident that pupils take pride in their work. Pupils say religious education 'can shape our lives and make us a good person; we think about what Jesus did in the past, so we can do it in the future'. Most pupils say they enjoy religious education and 84% of parents agree or strongly agree that this is the case for their children. Pupils make good progress in lessons in knowing and remembering more, using 'knowledge organisers' to recall key vocabulary and previous learning. Pupils can demonstrate how they make progress and confidently articulate their next targets. Attainment is in line with other core subjects. However, most pupils do not identify in religious education lessons that there are opportunities provided for silent or prayerful reflection.

Most teachers are confident in the teaching of religious education. They ensure good progress by deepening pupils' understanding of scripture. Teacher questioning is effective and challenging; planning is linked to the needs of all pupils. In Year 3/4, pupils had to name communities to which they belong, and they responded with reference to the school, parish, trust and, following discussion, the diocese. In some classes, ongoing practical activities ensure that pupils revisit previous learning. Pupils' work is celebrated within lessons, ensuring all know how to achieve their learning targets. The school's marking policy is consistently applied, and pupils clearly understand it. There are few opportunities for spiritual reflection in religious

education lessons. Evidence in books demonstrates a range of creative activities through art and drama. Teachers deploy resources and teaching assistants effectively so that learning is maximised. The religious education programme is well delivered and has parity with other subjects, placing it at the core of the school curriculum. Coaching, peer mentoring and team-teaching strategies support colleagues, ensuring that all tasks link to the agreed curriculum. Religious education is supplemented with other tasks which enrich pupils' learning, such as the use of religious artwork, scripture detectives and drama.

Leaders and governors ensure staff access high-quality training through the diocese and in-house support in regard to religious education. The subject leader has a clear vision for teaching and learning. There has been a focus on reducing staff workload: whole class feedback is prioritised over written methods. The sequential curriculum is planned to meet the needs of all pupils. Leaders provide pupils with enrichment activities through mission days, 'World Culture Day' and retreats to The Briars Youth Centre. Leaders and governors' evaluation is based on monitoring, lesson visits, pupil progress and whole school 'book looks', clearly focussing on, 'what is working well' and 'what could be even better'. Leaders and governors are committed to ensuring that religious education is seen as the central subject within the school and receives adequate time, resourcing and funding. The syllabus is a faithful expression of the Religious Education Curriculum Directory (RECD).

Collective worship

The quality and range of liturgy and prayer provided by the school

Collective worship key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

How well pupils participate in and respond to the school's collective worship

2

Provision

The quality of collective worship provided by the school

2

Leadership

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for collective worship

1

2

Pupils show great respect and reverence in whole-school celebrations of the word. They are eager to make contributions which show deep thinking, listening to adults and each other carefully. Pupils understand that there are different ways of praying, including responding to scripture, using traditional prayers and meditation. Regular prayer and liturgy opportunities encourage pupils to reflect on their own lives and lead them to action, putting the needs of others first. Pupils enjoy planning for these times, working well with others to prepare engaging experiences of prayer and liturgy. They undertake liturgical ministries enthusiastically and evaluate the quality of the prayer and liturgy they have planned. Although pupils are not consistently building up, in incremental steps, to lead with confidence, understanding and skill, they can make connections and think of themes around which to plan prayerful occasions. They speak about how they use scripture and hymns to influence their work in other areas of the curriculum: for example, a Year 5 pupil remembered that, 'Jesus told us to love one another and we do this when we give to the food bank'. Evidence from prayer journals shows that pupils understand the impact prayer has on their lives.

Prayer and liturgy are central to daily life. Clear plans are in place to celebrate significant liturgical times, such as holy days of obligation and important times in the Church's seasons. The school offers a variety of ways of praying throughout the liturgical year which reflect Catholic traditions, such as the Sacrament of Reconciliation, the Rosary, and the Stations of the Cross. Pupils choose a range of resources, such as 'Let us pray 2gether', to support the centrality of prayer and liturgy across the school. However, the opportunity to be creative within prayer and liturgy can be lacking, including few chances to offer time for spontaneous prayer when praying. Staff have received regular training from the diocese and lay chaplains, resulting in various areas across

the school being dedicated to prayer. These prayer areas are well cared for and resourced. All classrooms have focal areas highlighting relevant liturgical artefacts. Staff work well with families and the parishes to include all in the prayer life of the school. Families and parishioners are always invited into school for Mass. Governors have maintained good links with the parish to ensure that pupils are active participants in a range of parish activities.

Leaders and governors plan effective and detailed prayer policies which are consistently reviewed. Leaders and governors have an insightful understanding of how pupils' skills and independence develop in prayer and liturgy, although this is not consistently embedded within all classroom practice. The school calendar is meticulously planned, ensuring time and space for liturgy and prayer. Leaders and lay chaplains clearly understand the variety of ways of praying as part of the Catholic tradition: they have a comprehensive understanding of the liturgical year, and ensure prayer and liturgy are relevant and purposeful, consistently linking planning with the needs of their local community. Leaders are continually involved within the parish community, supporting sacramental preparation and parish celebrations. The parish priest regularly celebrates Mass with the whole school: he is clear that 'all pupils of faith, and no faith, have their school mission at the centre of their participation within Mass'. Leaders and governors prioritise the need to offer regular, high-quality opportunities for the professional development of all staff in relation to liturgical formation and the planning of prayer and liturgy. Governors are deeply committed to their role in safeguarding the Catholic mission and liturgical life of the school.

Information about the school

Full name of school	Bishop Ellis Catholic Voluntary Academy
School unique reference number (URN)	149144
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	8553345
Full postal address of the school	Barkby Thorpe Lane, Thurmaston, Leicester, LE4 8GP
School phone number	001162695510
Headteacher	Andrew Monaghan
Chair of governors	Massimiliano Fortis
School Website	www.bishopellis.leics.sch.uk
Trusteeship	Diocesan
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	St Thomas Aquinas Catholic Multi Academy Trust
Phase	Primary
Type of school	Academy
Admissions policy	Non-selective
Age-range of pupils	5-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	13 November 2017
Previous denominational inspection grade	2

The inspection team

Patricia Chapman
Joanne Green

Lead
Team

Key to grade judgements

Grade	England	Wales
1	Outstanding	Excellent
2	Good	Good
3	Requires improvement	Adequate and requires improvement
4	Inadequate	Unsatisfactory and in need of urgent improvement